

Claims:

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1. An apparatus for generating a hybrid speech model associated to a given speech element, said hybrid speech model being suitable for use by a speech recognition device during speech recognition, said apparatus comprising:

- an input for receiving an input signal derived from a spoken utterance that contains at least one speech element that potentially matches the given speech element;
- a model group associated to the given speech element, said model group comprising a plurality of speech models, each speech model of said plurality of speech models being a different representation of the given speech element;
- a processing unit coupled to the input for processing the input signal and the model group to generate a hybrid speech model associated to the given speech element, said hybrid speech model being a combination of speech models in said plurality of speech models on the basis of the input signal derived from the spoken utterance;
- an output for releasing a signal indicative of said hybrid speech model associated to the given speech element in a format suitable for use by a speech recognition device.

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2. An apparatus as defined in claim 1, wherein the given speech element is an element selected from the group consisting of phones, diphones, syllables and words.

5 3. An apparatus as defined in claim 2, wherein said input signal derived from a spoken utterance is indicative of a speaker specific speech model associated to the at least one speech element.

10 4. An apparatus as defined in claim 3, wherein said hybrid speech model is weighted toward the speaker specific speech model.

15 5. An apparatus as defined in claim 4, wherein said hybrid speech model is derived by computing a linear combination of the speech models in said model group.

20 6. An apparatus as defined in claim 5, wherein said input is a first input and wherein said input signal is a first input signal, said apparatus further comprising:

a) a second input for receiving a second input signal conveying a data element identifying the given speech element;

25 b) a database of model groups comprising a plurality of model groups, each model group being associated to a respective speech element, each model group comprising a set of speech models;

30 said processing unit being further operative for extracting from said database of model groups a certain model group associated to the data element

received at said second input identifying the given speech element.

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7. A method for generating a hybrid speech model associated to a given speech element, said hybrid speech model being suitable for use by a speech recognition device during speech recognition, said method comprising:

- 10 - receiving an input signal derived from a spoken utterance that contains at least one speech element that potentially matches the given speech element;
- 15 - providing a model group associated to the given speech element, said model group comprising a plurality of speech models, each speech model of said plurality of speech models being a different representation of the given speech element;
- 20 - processing the input signal and the model group to generate a hybrid speech model associated to the given speech element, said hybrid speech model being a combination of speech models in said plurality of speech models on the basis of the input signal derived from the spoken
- 25 utterance;
- releasing a signal indicative of said hybrid speech model associated to the given speech element in a format suitable for use by a speech recognition device.

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8. A computer readable medium comprising a program element suitable for execution by a computing apparatus for generating a hybrid speech model associated to a given speech element, said hybrid speech model being suitable for use by a speech recognition device during speech recognition, said computing apparatus comprising:

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- a memory unit for storing a model group associated to the given speech element, said model group comprising a plurality of speech models, each speech model of said plurality of speech models being a different representation of the given speech element;

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- a processor operatively connected to said memory unit, said program element when executing on said processor being operative for implementing:

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- an input for receiving an input signal derived from a spoken utterance that contains at least one speech element that potentially matches the given speech element;

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- a processing unit coupled to the input for processing the input signal and the model group to generate a hybrid speech model associated to the given speech element, said hybrid speech model being a combination of speech models in said plurality of speech models on the basis of the input signal derived from the spoken utterance;

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- an output for releasing a signal indicative of said hybrid speech model associated to the given speech element in a format suitable for use by a speech recognition device.

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9. An apparatus for generating a complex speech model associated to a given speech element, said complex speech model being suitable for use by a speech recognition device during speech recognition, said apparatus comprising:

- an input for receiving an input signal derived from a spoken utterance that contains at least one speech element that potentially matches the given speech element;

- a model group associated to the given speech element, said model group comprising a plurality of speech models, each speech model of said plurality of speech models being a different representation of the given speech element, said model group comprising two sets of speech models namely a first set having speech models of a first type and a second set having speech models of a second type, each speech model of a first type in said first set being associated to a speech model of the second type in the second set;

- a processing unit coupled to the input for:

a) processing the input signal and the model group to generate a hybrid speech model associated to the given speech element, said hybrid speech model being a combination of speech models of the first type in said plurality of speech models on the basis of the input signal derived from the spoken utterance;

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b) processing the hybrid speech model to generate a complex speech model associated to the given speech element, said complex speech model being a combination of speech models of the second type in said plurality of speech models;

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- an output for releasing a signal indicative of said complex speech model associated to the given speech element in a format suitable for use by a speech recognition device.

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10. An apparatus as defined in claim 9, wherein any speech model of a second type is indicative of a speech model having a higher complexity than a speech model of a first type to which it is associated.

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11. An apparatus as defined in claim 10, wherein the given speech element is indicative of a data element selected from the set consisting of phones, diphones, syllables and words.

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12. An apparatus as defined in claim 11, wherein said input signal derived from a spoken utterance is indicative of a speaker specific speech model associated to the at least one speech element.

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13. An apparatus as defined in claim 12, wherein said hybrid speech model is weighted toward the speaker specific speech model.

14. An apparatus as defined in claim 13, wherein said hybrid speech model is derived by computing a linear combination of the speech models of the first type.

5 15. An apparatus as defined in claim 14, wherein said linear combination is a first linear combination and is characterized by a first set of parameters indicative of weights associated to speech models of the first type, said complex speech model being derived by computing a
10 second linear combination of the speech models of the second type, said second linear combination being characterized by a second set of parameters indicative of weights associated to speech models of the second type.

15 16. An apparatus as defined in claim 15, wherein said first set of parameters and said second set of parameters are indicative of substantially same weights.

20 17. An apparatus as defined in claim 10, wherein said input is a first input and wherein said input signal is a first input signal, said apparatus further comprising:

a) a second input for receiving a second input signal indicative of a data element identifying the given speech element;

25 b) a database of model groups comprising a plurality of model groups, each model group being associated to a respective speech element, each model group comprising two sets of speech models namely a first set having speech models of a
30 first type and a second set having speech models of a second type, each speech model of a first

type in said first set being associated to a speech model of the second type in the second set;

said processing unit being further operative for extracting from said database of model groups a certain model group associated to the data element received at said second input identifying the given speech element.

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18. A computer readable medium comprising a data structure for storing a plurality of model groups, each model group being associated to a respective speech element in a phonetic alphabet, each model group comprising a plurality of speech models, each model group being suitable for use by a processing device.

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19. A computer readable medium as defined in claim 18, wherein the given speech element is indicative of a data element selected from the set consisting of phones, diphones, syllables and words.

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20. A computer readable medium as defined in claim 19, wherein each model group comprises two sets of speech models namely a first set having a plurality of speech models of a first type and a second set having a plurality of speech models of a second type, each speech model of a first type in said first set being associated to a speech model of the second type in the second set, each speech model of the second type being indicative of a speech model having a higher complexity

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that a speech model of the first type to which the speech model of the second type is associated.

21. A speech recognition system comprising:

- 5 - an input for receiving an input signal indicative of a spoken utterance that is indicative of at least one speech element;
- 10 - a first processing unit coupled to said input operative for processing the input signal to derive from a speech recognition dictionary at least one speech model associated to a given speech element that constitutes a potential match to the at least one speech element;
- 15 - a second processing unit coupled to said first processing unit for generating a modified version of the at least one speech model on the basis of the input signal;
- 20 - a third processing unit coupled to said second processing unit for processing the input signal on the basis of the modified version of the at least one speech model to generate a recognition result indicative of whether the modified version of the at least one speech model constitutes a match to the input signal;
- 25 - an output for releasing a signal indicative of the recognition result.

22. A speech recognition system as defined in claim 21, wherein said first processing unit is operative for generating a speaker specific speech model derived on the basis of the input signal, the speaker specific

speech model being indicative of the acoustic characteristics of the least one speech element.

- 5 23. A speech recognition system as defined in claim 22, wherein said modified version of the at least one speech model is indicative of a hybrid speech model associated to the given speech element.

- 10 24. A speech recognition system as defined in claim 23, wherein said second processing unit comprises:
- 15 - coupling member for allowing data exchange between the first processing unit and the second processing unit, said coupling member being suitable for receiving the speaker specific speech model derived from the input signal;
 - 20 - a model group associated to the given speech element, said model group comprising a plurality of speech models, each speech model of said plurality of speech models being a different representation of the given speech element;
 - 25 - a functional unit coupled to the coupling member for processing the speaker specific speech model and the model group to generate the hybrid speech model associated to the given speech element, said hybrid speech model being a combination of speech models in said plurality of speech models on the basis of the
 - 30 speaker specific speech model;

5 - an output coupling member for allowing data
 exchange between the second processing unit and
 the third processing unit, said output coupling
 member being suitable for releasing a signal
 indicative of the hybrid speech model
 associated to the given speech element.

10 25. A speech recognition system as defined in claim 24,
 wherein said hybrid speech model is weighted toward the
 speaker specific speech model.

15 26. A speech recognition system as defined in claim 24,
 wherein said hybrid speech model is derived by computing
 a linear combination of the speech models in said group
 of speech models.

20 27. A speech recognition system as defined in claim 24,
 wherein said coupling member is a first coupling member,
 said second processing unit further comprising:
 a) a second coupling member for allowing data
 exchange between the first processing unit and
 the second processing unit, said second coupling
 member being suitable for receiving a data
 element identifying the given speech element;
25 b) a database of model groups comprising a plurality
 of model groups, each model group being
 associated to a respective speech element, each
 model group comprising a set of speech models;
 said functional unit being further operative for
30 extracting from said database of model groups a
 certain model group associated to the data element

received at said second coupling member identifying the given speech element.

28. A speech recognition system as defined in claim 22,
5 wherein said modified version of the at least one speech model is indicative of a complex speech model associated to the given speech element.

29. A speech recognition system as defined in claim 28,
10 wherein said second processing unit comprises:

- coupling member for allowing data exchange between the first processing unit and the second processing unit, said coupling member being suitable for receiving the speaker specific speech model derived from the input signal;
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- a model group associated to the given speech element, said model group comprising a plurality of speech models, each speech model of said plurality of speech models being a different representation of the given speech element, said model group comprising two sets of speech models namely a first set having speech models of a first type and a second set having speech models of a second type, each speech model of a first type in said first set being associated to a speech model of the second type in the second set;
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- a functional unit coupled to the coupling member for:
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5 a) processing the speaker specific speech model and the model group to generate a hybrid speech model associated to the given speech element, said hybrid speech model being a combination of speech models of the first type in said plurality of speech models on the basis of the speaker specific speech model;

10 b) processing the hybrid speech model to generate a complex speech model associated to the given speech element, said complex speech model being a combination of speech models of the second type in said plurality of speech models;

15 - an output coupling member for allowing data exchange between the second processing unit and the third processing unit, said coupling member being suitable for releasing a signal indicative of the complex speech model associated to the given speech element.

20 30. A speech recognition system as defined in claim 29, wherein any speech model of the second type is indicative of a speech model having a higher complexity than a speech model of the first type to which it is associated.

30 31. A speech recognition system as defined in claim 30, wherein said hybrid speech model is weighted toward the speaker specific speech model.

32. A speech recognition system as defined in claim 31,
wherein said hybrid speech model is derived by computing
a linear combination of the speech models of the first
type.

33. A speech recognition system as defined in claim 32,
wherein said linear combination is a first linear
combination and is characterized by a first set of
parameters indicative of weights associated to speech
models of the first type, said complex speech model being
derived by computing a second linear combination of the
speech models of the second type, said second linear
combination being characterized by a second set of
parameters indicative of weights associated to speech
models of the second type.

34. A speech recognition system as defined in claim 33,
wherein said first set of parameters and said second set
of parameters is indicative of substantially the same
weights.

35. An apparatus for generating a hybrid speech model
associated to a given speech element, said hybrid
speech model being suitable for use by a speech
recognition device during speech recognition, said
apparatus comprising:

- means for receiving an input signal derived
from a spoken utterance that contains at least
one speech element that potentially matches the
given speech element;

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- a model group associated to the given speech element, said model group comprising a plurality of speech models, each speech model of said plurality of speech models being a different representation of the given speech element;

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- means for processing the input signal and the model group to generate a hybrid speech model associated to the given speech element, said hybrid speech model being a combination of speech models in said plurality of speech models on the basis of the input signal derived from the spoken utterance;

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- means for releasing a signal indicative of said hybrid speech model associated to the given speech element in a format suitable for use by a speech recognition device.

36. A speech recognition system comprising:

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- means receiving an input signal indicative of a spoken utterance that is indicative of at least one speech element;

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- means for processing the input signal to derive from a speech recognition dictionary at least one speech model associated to a given speech element that constitutes a potential match to the at least one speech element;

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- means for generating a modified version of the at least one speech model on the basis of the input signal;

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- means for processing the input signal on the basis of the modified version of the at least one speech model to generate a recognition result indicative of whether the modified version of the at least one speech model constitutes a match to the input signal;
- means for releasing a signal indicative of the recognition result.